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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 SEOUL 001450

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; September 10, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo
Liberty Forward Party Lawmaker Assails Unification Ministry for
Alleged Attempt to Cover up Another "Water Attack"
by N. Korea in August

JoongAng Ilbo, Hankook Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun,
Segye Ilbo, All TVs
Unification Minister Hyun:
"North Korea's Water Discharge Intentional"

Dong-a Ilbo
Technology Leakage; Russia Found to Have Developed
Vehicle Modeled on GM-Daewoo Lacetti

Hankyoreh Shinmun
Government Agencies Ignore Advice to Correct
Human Rights Violations

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

ROK Unification Minister Hyun In-taek said at the National
Assembly's Standing Committee on Unification yesterday that North
Korea appears to have acted intentionally when it released dam water
on Sunday to cause a flash flood on the Imjin River near the border.
(All, All TVs)

A key ROKG official said yesterday that there is an understanding
among countries involved in the Six-Party Talks, such as the U.S.
and the ROK, that a U.S.-North Korea bilateral dialogue may take
place even before the Six-Party Talks restart, if the talks
facilitate a resumption of the Six-Party process. This indicates a
departure from the previous position of the U.S. that there will be
no bilateral talks with the North unless it returns to the Six-Party
Talks. (Dong-a, Chosun, Hankook, Hankyoreh, MBC, OhmyNews)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

The U.S. Department of State moved on September 8 to freeze the assets of two North Korean entities believed to be involved in atomic and missile programs - the General Bureau of Atomic Energy and Korea Tangun Trading Corp. (JoongAng, Dong-a, Hankook, Seoul, Segye)

The Center for Strategic and International Studies said in its preview of the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review that the U.S. is bracing for a possible nuclear war with North Korea, as well as the regime's possible sudden collapse. (Dong-a, Hankyoreh, Seoul, Segye, KBS)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

Korea - North/South tensions over river flooding

All newspapers gave prominent attention to ROK Unification Minister Hyun In-taek's September 9 statement. He said at the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Unification that North Korea appears to have acted intentionally when it released dam water on Sunday to cause a flash flood on the Imjin River near the border. Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo quoted President Lee Myung-bak as saying on September 9, "The North Koreans seem to have a different perception of life." The daily also observed in its inside-page story that the North Korean military may have acted deliberately in order to express discontent about Pyongyang's conciliatory gestures toward the ROK.

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Conservative Chosun Ilbo reported in its top story that Rep. Park Sun-young of the minor opposition Liberty Forward Party assailed the Unification Ministry yesterday for an alleged attempt to cover up what she called another "water attack" by North Korea that occurred on August 27.

Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized: "The hard-line stance (toward the North following the Imjin River incident) is not helpful to either the North or the South. In this sense, the ROKG is right to consider proposing inter-Korean dialogue regarding the incident."

North Korean Nuclear Issue

Most major newspapers reported that the U.S. Department of State moved on September 8 to freeze the assets of two North Korean entities believed to be involved in atomic and missile programs - the General Bureau of Atomic Energy and Korea Tangun Trading Corp.

All newspapers quoted a key ROKG official as saying yesterday that there is an understanding among all Six-Party countries except North Korea that a U.S.-North Korea bilateral dialogue may happen even before the Six-Party Talks restarts, if the talks facilitate a resumption of the Six-Party process. This indicates a departure from the previous position of the U.S. that there will be no bilateral talks with the North unless it returns to the Six-Party Talks. Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun and conservative Chosun Ilbo quoted U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Bosworth as saying before leaving Tokyo on September 8 that 1) it has not been decided yet how (the U.S.) will respond to North Korea's invitation, and 2) a decision regarding that response could come in the next few weeks. The newspaper also quoted an ROKG official as saying, "Not only the U.S. but also other nations can have bilateral talks with the North," which indicates that bilateral talks between North Korea and the U.S. and between North Korea and China may happen in order to facilitate the resumption of the Six-Party Talks.

Most major newspapers reported that the Center for Strategic and International Studies said in its preview of the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review that the U.S. is bracing for a possible nuclear war with North Korea, as well as the regime's possible sudden collapse.

Conservative Chosun Ilbo and Segye Ilbo and moderate Seoul Shinmun quoted Pakistan's nuclear scientist A.Q. Khan as saying in an August 31 Pakistan local television interview that Pakistan purchased 200 missiles from North Korea in 1999. Khan denied, however, that he transferred nuclear technology to North Korea in return for securing North Korea's missile technology. Khan added that Pakistan took six years to weaponize highly enriched uranium, which implies that North Korea will also take at least several years to develop a highly enriched uranium bomb.

Japan

Hankyoreh Shinmun reported that the Democratic Party of Japan, the Social Democratic Party, and the People's New Party struck a coalition deal on September 9 and agreed to review aspects of the U.S. military presence in the country.

Afghanistan

Conservative Segye Ilbo replayed the U.K.'s Times story that Afghanistan President Karzai's alleged election fraud could endanger security in Afghanistan, thereby dealing a blow to the timetable for Western countries to withdraw their troops from the nation.

Iran

Moderate Hankook Ilbo reported that the Iranian government submitted a proposal regarding the resumption of nuclear talks to representatives of the six nations involved in the talks, and the

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details of the proposal, although not disclosed, will determine whether the nuclear talks will resume or not.

OPINIONS/EDITORIALS

SEOUL MUST PREPARE FOR REGIME COLLAPSE IN N. KOREA
(Chosun Ilbo, September 10, 2009, page 35)

The U.S. Defense Department is said to be seriously considering the inclusion of a regime collapse scenario for North Korea in the Quadrennial Defense Report (QDR) to be delivered to Congress early next year. The QDR preparation team, led by Defense Under Secretary Michele Flournoy, is studying how the U.S. should deal with 11 different scenarios, including loss of control by the Pakistani government over its nuclear weapons arsenal and a military confrontation between Taiwan and China. The fact that the possibility of regime collapse in North Korea is being studied under the QDR, a blueprint for defense policy, signals that the prospect of sudden changes in the North has become part of the U.S. government's official agenda.

This year, the U.S. government has been putting the same amount of focus on how to deal with sudden changes in North Korea as it does on the North's nuclear weapons and missile programs. During her first trip to the ROK in February, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed concern about the succession to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il. "If there is a succession, even if it's a peaceful succession, that creates more uncertainty, and it may also encourage behaviors that are even more provocative," she said. Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg proposed talks with Chinese officials to discuss how to deal with the succession in North Korea. Beijing is said to have rejected Washington's offer due to fears of agitating Pyongyang.

But China is not neglecting the issue. Quite the opposite: it has been steadily increasing troops along the border. It could use them either to intervene directly if North Korea undergoes a sudden change or to take the issue to the UN and block ROK efforts to unify with the North. Japan has also quietly been preparing for some time to deal with a crisis in North Korea.

The U.S., China, Japan and other powers now have no choice but to treat an emergency situation in North Korea as a major

consideration. Kim, who disappeared from public eye for almost two months last year due to a stroke, is now attending official events again, but nobody can say with certainty how long the 67-year-old leader will wield absolute power.

The ROK would face a national emergency if something happened to Kim, which could cause North Korea to spiral into chaos and cause its nuclear weapons and missiles to fall into the hands of opportunists. The U.S., which believes its national security depends on preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons, will be on high alert. Unexpected changes in North Korea are like buried landmines (that could disrupt) the political situation in Northeast Asia and could affect the lives of 75 million Koreans on both sides of the border.

But we are unprepared. A draft operational plan prepared by the ROK and the U.S. to handle a sudden change in North Korea was downgraded by the Roh Moo-hyun Administration, which was afraid of incensing North Korea. But whether we like it or not, regional superpowers have already begun preparing for sudden changes in North Korea. If the North Korean regime collapses, we would not be able to use that opportunity for our benefit and would end up entrusting our fate once again to the hands of other countries.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

U.S. KOREAN GOVERNMENT SHOULD PREVENT REPEAT OF IMJIN TRAGEDY

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(Hankyoreh Shinmun, September 10, 2009, page 35)

Various debates taking place since the "Imjin Disaster" are failing to move in a proper direction and are instead going astray. Rather than focusing on investigating the cause of the incident and discussing substantive measures to prevent a repeat, debates are moving towards ideological attacks and apportioning blame.

First, these debates are having an ill effect on the thawing atmosphere of inter-Korean relations. Of course, North Korea provided the primary cause. Even though six South Korean citizens ultimately lost their lives, North Korea has not yet expressed an apology or regret. Looking beyond whether North Korea violated international agreements or existing practice, its failure to make a reference to the human losses is worth criticizing from a humanitarian perspective.

North Korea's expressed reason for releasing water from their dam without notice also lacks persuasiveness. North Korea said it immediately released the water when the water level at its dam rose, but there has not been a lot of rain recently in North Korea. An additional, convincing explanation is required.

Hardliners in the ROK are seizing on this opportunity to spout confrontational claims. Some media are issuing believe-it-or-not reports claiming that the water release from Hwanggang Dam was ordered by North Korean leaders or military leadership. Some figures are agitating anti-North Korea opinion by reviving the anti-communist logic of the military governments of the past, claiming the ROK needs to build a second Peace Dam to stop a North Korean water attack.

The hard-line stance (toward the North following the Imjin River incident) is not helpful to either the North or the South. As inter-Korean relations worsen, our political and economic losses grow. If flood prevention measures for the Imjin River, which repeatedly floods, is our primary focus, it would be much cheaper to build an inter-Korean cooperative system than it would be to build a contingency dam. In this sense, the ROKG is right to consider proposing inter-Korean dialogue regarding the incident. The ROK and North Korea should quickly adjourn to the negotiating room, frankly express their opinions, and ensure that a similar incident does not happen again.

Also deeply problematic is how the ROK government appears to be

avoiding its own responsibility by taking advantage of North Korea's "water attack." ROK authorities' emergency system failure compounded North Korea's failure to give sufficient notice about the water release which resulted in this man-made disaster. Despite this, the ROK government is choosing to condemn North Korea, and itself is also failing to offer an apology to the people. The ROK government must not exaggerate and stress the other side's responsibility in order to avoid its own responsibility. Those involved in the ROK must be held accountable and must formulate stringent measures to prevent a repeat.

(This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.)

FEATURES

5 COUNTRIES GIVE NOD TO N. KOREA-U.S. TALKS
(Chosun Ilbo, September 10, 2009, page 3)

By Reporter Lim Min-hyuk

The ROK, China, Japan, Russia and the United States are reaching consensus to support bilateral talks between North Korea and the U.S., if that can persuade the North to return to the Six-Party denuclearization talks. Until recently, the five countries were in favor of such bilateral talks only after North Korea pledges to return to the Six-Party Talks or demonstrates political commitment

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(to denuclearization). But now the countries support U.S.-North Korea bilateral talks if they can serve to resuscitate the Six-Party process.

A key ROKG official said that nothing has been decided yet on how U.S.-North Korea talks will take place in the future. The official added that however, there is an understanding among the five countries that a U.S.-North Korea bilateral dialogue may take place even before the Six-Party Talks restart, if the talks facilitate a resumption of the Six-Party process. The official said that discussions about the matter were held during the recent Asia tour of Stephen Bosworth, the U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy. It has not been decided whether Bosworth will visit North Korea and if so when, but some kind of decision is expected within weeks. After his visit to Japan, Bosworth said, "The United States is willing to engage with North Korea on a bilateral basis, and we are currently considering how best to respond to a North Korean invitation for bilateral talks."

The shift in position among the five countries reflects an assessment that it will be easier to bring North Korea back to the table by using some incentive as well as pressure by way of international sanctions. By making it clear that the goal of the bilateral talks would only be to facilitate the Six-Party Talks, the five countries believe they can thwart North Korea's attempt to sabotage the Six-Party Talks and salvage their position that bilateral meetings must fit into the Six-Party framework.

But an ROKG official said, "All this can only happen when there is a fundamental change in North Korea's attitude to denuclearization. Because it is North Korea who more desperately needs dialogue, the U.S. is in no hurry at all."

TOKOLA